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NEW JERSEY UNHAPPY WITH IRAQ POLICY

Monmouth/Gannett Poll finds most want troops home within the year

With a Congressional vote opposing the president's "troop surge" scheduled for today, support for George W. Bush among the New Jersey public is about as low as it can go. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* found that few Garden State residents approve of the president's handling of Iraq, most would support measures to block funding of his call for additional troops there, and the majority wants to see all troops home within the year.

Currently, President Bush's overall job performance rating among New Jerseyans stands at 27% approve to 66% disapprove. Compared to a recent national poll (that has the president's job at 32%-59%), his approval rating in the state is 5 percentage points lower than it is in the country as a whole. In fact, Bush's *disapproval* rating in New Jersey has worsened by 10 points since last summer when his job rating in the state stood at 30%-56%.

A key source of discontent with the president is his handling of the situation in Iraq – 21% of New Jerseyans approve of this while an overwhelming 74% disapprove. The comparable national figures on Bush's handling of Iraq are 27%-68%.

A key element of the president's renewed Iraq strategy is increasing our military presence in that country by more than 20,000 troops. However, fully 64% of New Jerseyans say Congress should block funding for more troops (similar to the 61% nationally). Only 28% say Congress should allow the additional funding required to send more troops to Iraq (lower than 36% nationally).

In fact, 6-in-10 New Jerseyans want to see the troops brought home within the year. Specifically, 19% say we should pull out all troops immediately (compared to 12% nationally) and 42% say they should be pulled out gradually over the next year (similar to 40% nationally). Another 27% say U.S. troops should stay until the Iraqis are capable of taking over, and only 6% feel the U.S. should increase our troop presence at this time.

“New Jersey opinion is pretty much in line with the nation on this issue, perhaps just a shade bluer regarding the president’s plan,” remarked Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

One controversial proposal being floated by the Pentagon is to deploy National Guard troops in combat more frequently. The current policy limits National Guard troops to only one tour of combat duty in a five-year period. While New Jersey officials have been assured that none of our own state’s troops will be redeployed until 2011, 68% of residents say it is unfair to deploy National Guard troops more frequently in combat zones than they expected when they enlisted. Only 25% feel that it is fair to redeploy these troops more than once in a five-year period because they should be ready and willing to serve whenever needed.

Breaking down state opinion on Iraq by political party produces some expected differences. However, it is interesting to note that Republicans are not lock-step with their president when it comes to Iraq. While 63% of Bush’s partisans approve of his overall job performance, Republican supporters split 48% approve to 45% disapprove on his handling of the war; and 44% of them say we should pull out of Iraq within the year. Among other partisan groups, large majorities of Democrats and independents – two-thirds or more – disapprove of Bush’s job performance in general and his handling of Iraq, want congress to block funding for a troop surge and oppose an accelerated redeployment of National Guard troops.

The poll also found that only 24% of New Jerseyans believe that the country as a whole is headed in the right direction compared to 66% who believe it is on the wrong track. This finding is similar to recent national polls.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 801 New Jersey adults from February 8 to 12, 2007. These results have a ± 3.5 percent margin of error. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the Gannett New Jersey newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, Home News Tribune, and Ocean County Observer).

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Would you say things in the country are going in the right direction, or have they gotten off on the wrong track?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Right Direction	24%	25%	21%	14%	22%	48%
Wrong Track	66%	66%	65%	78%	65%	45%
(VOL) Depends	7%	7%	7%	7%	9%	4%
(VOL) Don't Know	3%	2%	6%	1%	4%	3%
Unwtd N	801	681	120	278	306	176

National Comparison:	NJ	NAT'L*
Right Direction	24%	28%
Wrong Track	66%	68%
(VOL) Don't Know	10%	4%
Unwtd N	801	1000

* Associated Press-Ipsos Poll, Feb. 5-7, 2007

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the job George Bush is doing as president?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	27%	30%	17%	12%	24%	63%
Disapprove	66%	64%	73%	85%	67%	33%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	6%	10%	3%	10%	4%
Unwtd N	801	681	120	278	306	176

National Comparison:	NJ	NAT'L*
Approve	27%	32%
Disapprove	66%	59%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	9%
Unwtd N	801	1142

* CBS News Poll, Feb. 8-11, 2007

NEW JERSEY TREND:	February 2007	July 2006
Approve	27%	30%
Disapprove	66%	56%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	14%
Unwtd N	801	802

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq?"

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Approve	21%	23%	12%	9%	19%	48%
Disapprove	74%	72%	81%	88%	74%	45%
(VOL) Don't Know	6%	5%	8%	3%	7%	7%
Unwtd N	801	681	120	278	306	176

National Comparison:	NJ	NAT'L*
Approve	21%	27%
Disapprove	74%	68%
(VOL) Don't Know	6%	5%
Unwtd N	801	1142

* CBS News Poll, Feb. 8-11, 2007

4. Thinking about the situation in Iraq, do you think the United States should pull out all troops immediately, pull out all troops gradually over the next year, pull out after Iraqi troops are capable of taking over, or send more troops?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Pull out immediately	19%	18%	25%	28%	15%	12%
Pull out gradually	42%	42%	43%	53%	38%	32%
Pull out after Iraqis capable	27%	30%	19%	14%	34%	42%
Send more troops	6%	6%	7%	2%	7%	11%
(VOL) Don't Know	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	4%
Unwtd N	801	681	120	278	306	176

National Comparison:	NJ	NAT'L*
Pull out immediately	19%	12%
Pull out gradually	42%	40%
Pull out after Iraqis capable	27%	34%
Send more troops	6%	9%
(VOL) Don't Know	5%	5%
Unwtd N	801	900

* FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, Jan. 30-31, 2007

5. Thinking specifically about the additional troops President Bush plans to send to Iraq, what would you want your members of Congress to do? Should they vote to allow the government to spend money in order to send more troops to Iraq, or vote to block the government from spending money to send more troops to Iraq?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Allow	28%	29%	23%	14%	28%	56%
Block	64%	62%	70%	80%	63%	37%
(VOL) Don't Know	8%	9%	7%	7%	9%	7%
Unwtd N	801	681	120	278	306	176

National Comparison:	NJ	NAT'L*
Allow	28%	36%
Block	64%	61%
(VOL) Don't Know	8%	2%
Unwtd N	801	500

* CNN/Opinion Research Corporation Poll, Jan. 19-21, 2007

6. Previously, members of the National Guard who served in a combat zone would not be redeployed for at least five years. The current plan may require guard members to return to Iraq before their five years is up. Do you think this new policy is fair because the soldiers should be ready and willing to serve whenever needed, or unfair because the soldiers were told they would not have to return to combat so soon.

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep
Fair	25%	25%	25%	14%	25%	49%
Unfair	68%	68%	68%	80%	69%	45%
(VOL) Don't Know	7%	6%	8%	6%	6%	6%
Unwtd N	801	681	120	278	306	176

Results for this *Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll* are based on telephone interviews conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on February, 8-12, 2007 with a statewide random sample of 801 adult residents. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult New Jersey residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues which affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.

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